

ASPIRE

2024-2029 Strategic Plan



WL WEST LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY

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Letter from the President

Dear Campus Community,

Over the past year, we have envisioned, contemplated, and deliberated together to shape the future of West Liberty University. With those conversations in mind, and drawing on our rich history, we have developed *Aspire*, our new strategic plan.

Aspire reaffirms our commitment to creating and promoting innovative, inclusive, and inspirational opportunities that prepare graduates to be leaders in their communities and professions.

Our plan responds to the changing landscape of higher education in West Virginia and throughout the nation. The number of traditional-aged college students is decreasing, many who graduate high school do not go on to college, and many who start college do not finish. And because higher education is still the best path to economic opportunity, we are called upon to ensure that the transformative experience of a college education is within reach for students in the Ohio Valley.

To meet these challenges, we will cultivate a welcoming culture, so all students feel a sense of belonging on the Hilltop. We will expand experiential learning since we know it enhances education and positions students for the next step in their careers. We will develop new opportunities for learners at all stages of their lives. And we will grow our partnerships with our local communities and their businesses, non-profit organizations, and educational organizations.

We are doing more than preparing students for the workplace: We are empowering them to be citizens and leaders by encouraging them to explore ideas, to think critically and creatively and to examine their identities and values. We will strengthen a campus culture that fosters safety, acceptance, and authenticity, ensuring that every student feels valued and empowered to be ready to succeed.

Aspire also affirms our University's commitment to making effective decisions based on data, completing work efficiently, and growing and developing professionally, all in service to students.

I look forward to collaborating with you to implement *Aspire* and am confident that our achievements in the years ahead will transform our students, our university, and our community and state.

Dr. Tim Borchers

President of West Liberty University



Strategic Planning Process

Aspire is the result of a transparent, data-driven process through which the West Liberty campus community and key stakeholders were engaged in a year-long conversation about the future of the University.

The planning process was led by the Strategic Planning Committee which met 10 times during the 2023-24 academic year. Several key engagements with stakeholder groups informed the committee's work throughout the year, including:

- President Borchers met with more than 170 individuals and small groups during the first 100 days of his presidency to hear concerns, ideas, and suggestions for improvements. The report of his listening sessions, "100 Days on the Hilltop," served as a key source of data for the plan.
- An Environmental Scan was prepared and shared with campus groups in 4 sessions, including virtual sessions with Board of Governors and Foundation Board members.
- "Differentiation Workshops" were held with 12 groups including academic and administrative departments, Staff Council, undergraduate and graduate students, the Board of Governors, the Foundation Board, and the Wheeling area community.
- Three surveys of campus were conducted to gain feedback about the revised mission and vision, core values, main themes, and outcomes.
- In addition to surveys, in-person consultations were held with Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and the Student Government Association.
- Regular updates were shared via email with the campus and in regular meetings with the President's Council.

Following the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee on April 26 and endorsement by the President's Cabinet, the strategic plan was approved by the West Liberty University Board of Governors on June 5, 2024.

Implementation of the plan began during the summer of 2024 with several initiatives. The University Planning Committee will be appointed and convened in the Fall 2024 semester to monitor the plan's implementation and make recommendations for future initiatives on an annual basis.

Progress made towards the strategic plan's goals can be reviewed at this link: westliberty.edu/planning/ or at the QR code on the right.



About West Liberty

What is now West Liberty University was founded in 1837 as West Liberty Academy, making the school the oldest institution of higher education in West Virginia. In 1870, the school became West Liberty State Normal School and came under state control. With a strong history of teacher education training, the school was renamed West Liberty State Teachers College in 1931. Under the leadership of President Paul Elbin, the school's mission grew beyond teacher training, and in 1943 its name was changed to West Liberty State College. The school became West Liberty University on May 3, 2009.

West Liberty offers Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. Annual student headcount for 2022-23 was 2,597. The fall-to-fall retention rate of first-time students who began in Fall 2022 was 69% and the six-year graduation rate for students who began in Fall 2017 semester was 56%.

Of all undergraduates for 2022-23, 63% were female, 65% were from West Virginia, and 8% were minority. Of the first-time Fall 2022 students, 41% were Pell eligible.

Graduate programs were first offered in Fall 2008 and enrollment has steadily increased each year since. The first doctoral program was offered in the Fall 2023 semester.

At West Liberty University, we inspire students to reach their potential by blending a small-town environment with a comprehensive college experience. We provide hands-on learning experiences with personalized support in a safe and inclusive environment to prepare students for career success. Offering unique and relevant academic programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, West Liberty University is dedicated to fostering the aspirations of our students and ensuring that their educational journey is both enriching and boundless.



Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission: West Liberty University is a public university with a rich history of providing students with a comprehensive education from undergraduate to graduate degrees. Through experiential learning and personalized support, we empower students toward scholarly exploration, creative expression, and economic opportunity.

Vision: West Liberty University aspires to offer innovative, inclusive, and inspirational opportunities that prepare graduates to be leaders in their communities and professions.

Values:

- **Community:** WLU fosters a caring community of diverse students, faculty, and staff who work together to nurture a sense of belonging in a safe, supportive, and respectful environment.
- **Excellence:** WLU sets high standards for excellence through our commitment to promoting students' aspirations and intellectual development, and our constant pursuit of knowledge, evidenced in nationally recognized programs and certifications.
- **Innovation:** WLU cultivates innovation among faculty, staff, and students. We believe in a forward-thinking mindset that embraces change as an opportunity for growth and improvement. Our commitment to innovation empowers our community to tackle complex challenges, drive meaningful progress, and shape the future.
- **Integrity:** WLU requires all students, faculty, staff, and administrators to act with integrity, treating everyone with respect, fairness, and dignity. We uphold the highest standards of honesty, ethics, and accountability in all aspects of our academic and professional endeavors.



Themes and Outcomes

Theme 1: Cultivating Excellence, Innovation and Continuous Improvement in Academic Programs

West Liberty University is responsive to the evolving changes in the demographics of our student population, the opportunities we have to expand our mission to new learners, and the needs of our local community. We empower our students for future success by challenging them to apply their learning in a variety of contexts that align with the best practices in higher education. To do so, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- a. Review academic programs, facilities, and technology to meet the evolving requirements and qualifications of high-demand occupations, ensuring students are well-prepared for the workforce.
- b. Develop and promote relevant educational programs catering to learners seeking upskilling opportunities.
- c. Develop and offer a variety of certificates and micro-credentials to complement majors and minors, enhancing students' career prospects.
- d. Strengthen involvement in high impact practices such as student research initiatives, experiential learning, and global opportunities.
- e. Emphasize an integrated, intentional, and relevant General Education program as the cornerstone of our expansive undergraduate curriculum.



Theme 2: Supporting Student Growth & Success

West Liberty University is a community in which students can reach their full potential. We offer an opportunity-rich environment so that students explore their identities while they are supported by faculty, staff, and other students. To do so, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- a. Provide students, faculty, and staff a better understanding and connection to resources to support student success.
- b. Align curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular goals and outcomes in a way to serve student growth and development.
- c. Increase access to experiential learning opportunities and career development resources through collaboration with employer, community, and campus partners.
- d. Effectively use technology resources to elevate the student learning experience.
- e. Create environments where all students feel a sense of belonging and can explore their own identities and values.
- f. Develop strategies to increase the number of students completing 30, 60, and 90 credits each year.



Theme 3: Strengthening University Effectiveness

West Liberty University is an institution where its employees are able to make effective decisions, complete work efficiently, and grow and develop, all in service to students. We are effective communicators so that we can tell our story to our stakeholders in order to promote our successes. To do so, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- a. Use technology efficiently and effectively to increase our capacity.
- b. Develop a culture where decisions are based on research and data.
- c. Identify inefficiencies and revise policies and procedures that will enable faculty and staff to be more productive in their jobs.
- d. Encourage and engage in more communication across departments.
- e. Assess and evaluate our performance to identify areas of improvement.
- f. Provide enhanced opportunities and allocate resources for professional growth for employees.
- g. Foster a culture where employees feel a sense of belonging, empowerment, and engagement.
- h. Expand efforts to promote our brand promise and brand drivers.
- i. Improve the average contribution margin for academic programs.



Theme 4: Developing and Expanding Community Partnerships & Collaboration

West Liberty University has a mutually beneficial relationship with our region to serve our students but also the broader community. We are responsive to community needs while being mindful of the role our students can and will play in being leaders in their professions and communities. To do so, we will achieve the following outcomes:

- a. Build strong partnerships with the community, including business leaders and alumni, to develop career opportunities for our students.
- b. Prioritize students gaining valuable experience before entering the workforce through a variety of experiential learning opportunities in the local area.
- c. Expand partnerships with area schools to provide guidance to college-bound students.



Strategic Planning Committee

Tim Borchers, President (Tri-Chair)

Michelle Panepucci, Director of Admissions Operations (Tri-Chair)

Sherry Rocchio, Faculty in Gary E. West College of Business (Tri-Chair)

Kate Billings, Director of Student Activities/Title IX Coordinator

Hilary Bougher-Muckian, Faculty in College of Education and Human Performance

Eric Burkle, Head Baseball Coach and Staff Council Chair

Cyndi Galloway, Executive Assistant to the President

Greg Chase, Faculty Senate Representative

Lori Hudson, Vice President for Fiscal Affairs

Katie Kacmarik, Foundation Board Member

Cecilia Konchar Farr, Dean of Creative and Liberal Arts

Merilee Madera, Director of Distance Education

Jenna Maguire, Student Government Association President

David McKinley, Board of Governors Chair

Aron Massey, Faculty in College of Creative and Liberal Arts

Holly Racine, Faculty in College of Sciences

Ross Salvatori, Topper Association of Graduate Students President

Cassandra Seth, Associate Head Women's Basketball Coach/Senior Woman Administrator

Sherri Theaker, Dean of Graduate Studies

Sarah West, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

2023-24 West Liberty University Board of Governors

David H. McKinley, BOG Chair

Michael J. Baker, BOG Vice Chair

Thomas A. Cervone, BOG Secretary

Richard H. Carter

Jamie Evick

Katie Kacmarik

Richard A. Lucas

Stephanie L. Shaw

Erikka Storch

Dr. Robert Kreisberg, Faculty Representative

Lourdes Karas, WLU Staff Representative

Jenna Maguire, WLU Student Representative





WL WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

West Liberty University prohibits discrimination and is committed to providing equal opportunity and an educational and work environment free from discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, veteran status, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), genetic information, gender identity, or gender expression. West Liberty University shall adhere to all applicable state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action statutes and regulations. The university is dedicated to ensuring access and equal opportunity in its educational programs, related activities, and employment. Retaliation against an individual who has raised claims of illegal discrimination or cooperated with an investigation of such claims is prohibited.